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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the visit of President Bush to the campus of Southern Methodist University (SMU) for the May, 1992 commencement and lessons learned from the experience. The paper describes how SMU made use of lead time and suggests how to estimate cost of such a visit. Discussion of strategies for organizing describes the formation and work of appropriate committees. A section on priorities urges that institutions maintain their sense of institutional priorities by keeping them firmly in sight even in the crush of demands from media and White House teams. Further sections describe the usefulness of outside advice. A discussion of planning covers the need to think through each detail in an effort to be prepared for attendance, security, university relations and the event itself. One of various anecdotes cited tells how SMU successfully thwarted a three tiered media camera platform that the university administration felt would have ruined the ceremony for those attending. Separate sections describe working with various teams, including the pre-advance team, the advance team, the White House Communications Agency, the Secret Service, and the media. Finally a description of "Game Day" covers timing, dealing with demonstrators, and photo opportunities, and a discussion of the benefits of having such a visit, headed "Is It Worth It," concludes the paper. (JB)

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HOSTING THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

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HOSTING THE PRESIDENTIAL VISIT

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Presidential visits do not come very often for colleges and universities, but when they do, there is an urgent need for information and understanding of what is involved and expected.

On May 16, 1992, SMU hosted President George Bush at its 77th commencement. Bush delivered the commencement address and received a degree *honoris causa*. The event was the culmination of six weeks of hectic planning and preparation, and, despite a variety of difficulties, it went off without a hitch. Here is a summary of the experience and some of the lessons learned.

LEAD TIME AND RESOURCES

Visits by The President rarely are surprises, and although they can not be known with certainty or announced very far in advance, it is essential to take advantage of as much lead time as possible. Particularly important is the question of having adequate time to convey information to the expected audience concerning arrival, schedule, changes, security restrictions, and so on. In the case of a commencement, such as ours, one needs to recognize that graduates' parents often make commencement travel plans well in advance of the date.

Our coordinating team had six weeks to do its work: to rethink and replan our university's commencement, to develop and implement a ticketing plan for graduates and their guests, and to do all that was necessary to accommodate the President, his party, and the accompanying media. It was barely enough time, and just so by dint of dozens of people working very long hours during those weeks.

Preparation also includes funding. Costs will vary in accordance with the nature of the event, but it is well for those who issue Presidential invitations to understand that there will be significant unplanned expenses, only so much of which will be reimbursed by the White House. The amount of staff time and energy required also can be very considerable. Direct expenses will vary with the nature and duration of the event, but twenty thousand dollars probably is not an unreasonable *starting* estimate for any kind of event, except for a Presidential "grin and spin" or very brief address.

ORGANIZE

The administrative adage, "when in doubt, form a committee," is fully applicable. The POTUS (Secret Service parlance for the "*P*resident *o*f *t*he *U*nited *S*tates") is no ordinary guest speaker, and the plans and arrangements to be made can cover many dimensions of the institution. The nature of the event to some extent will determine who should serve on your committee. Our event was the May commencement, the most important annual event in the life of the university, involving all its constituencies. Accordingly, both student and faculty

representation were sought for our committee, in the form of the president of the senior class and faculty chief marshal. In addition, we had representatives from academic affairs, physical plant, the coliseum where commencement is held, public affairs, security, traffic and parking, the registrar, and several "events" generalists.

Members of the committee should be at the director level or above and have the perspective and experience to foresee issues and problems as well as the authority to deal with them. The chair of the committee must be someone who knows the campus, and who is well known, and he or she must be of sufficient rank to warrant the attention of the White House pre-advance and advance teams. Depending on the circumstances, he or she may need more than a little negotiating and diplomatic skill.

The nature of the event also will determine how often and long the committee will meet. Our committee had considerable early work to do in designing a ticketing plan, and so our first few weeks were devoted to that and related tasks. The week preceding the event is particularly demanding, as explained below, and *daily* meetings will be needed to deal with its business.

KNOW YOUR OWN PRIORITIES AND VALUES

Your Presidential visit will be an "official," that is, non-political visit. (If it is a *political* visit, then you have another set of problems with which to deal, beyond the scope of this article). As such there is already some recognition that it is "your" event, and that your priorities, customs, and so forth, should take precedence, at least *prima facie*. In the case of our commencement, the pre-advance and advance people with whom we dealt appeared mindful of these matters, and gave welcome assurance that they had no intention of intruding into or altering what is an important university ceremony, replete with its own traditions, standards, and so on.

In practice, however, this perspective can become confused. The people in the advance team, as explained below, are not always White House regulars and are not always sensitive, respectful, tactful, or even knowledgeable. We had to explain, several times, the difference between degrees *honoris causa* and degrees in course, to one such individual, who was also under the impression that the doctoral hood Mr. Bush would receive was of the Little Red Riding Hood variety. Further, this is after all The President of the United States of America, and it is only natural for everyone involved to get somewhat overwhelmed and perhaps overly cooperative. The crush of the final week's preparations and the multitudinous demands of the advance team, the White House Communications Agency, the Secret Service, the media, and so on, only add to the potential confusion.

One can best combat this tendency and maintain institutional priorities by knowing what they are and keeping them firmly in sight. In our case, we conceded at the outset that a Presidential visit was sufficiently extraordinary to warrant minor departures from custom and tradition, but that we would permit such departures only grudgingly. It was a point of some pride to keep it *our* event. Security issues we deemed to take precedence over everything else, of course. We were far less receptive to media and "political" issues.

GET HELP

Your institution's staff almost certainly will have sufficient experience and skill to mount the campus event in question. Where you will need help is in dealing with the White House, in understanding their procedures and priorities, in knowing your rights, and in knowing what is negotiable and what is not. White House people are busy and understaffed like everyone else, and they have little time to devote to advising you. Nor is it in their interest for you to be particularly well informed about your prerogatives.

We recognized all this early and sought assistance. The person we found is an alumna, now a professional fundraiser, but who served several years as a White House staffer and who is knowledgeable about advance work and then current White House staff. The pre-advance and advance teams were not thrilled to see her working for us--they understood immediately that they would not be able to walk all over us--but her advice to our committee all along the way was invaluable.

Another form of help that is somewhat more delicate, but also potentially crucial, is that of the local or state politicos. It so happened that the chair of The President's state campaign committee was close to one of our trustees, a person both sensitive to and respectful of academic values and priorities. Happily, we never had to call on this heavy artillery, but we kept him informed of our concerns all along the way, and we were ready to ask his help if it came to that.

FORESEE AND PLAN

In the case of our commencement we found it necessary to rethink virtually every detail of the event. What came to pass differed from previous commencements only in minor, even undetectable ways, but, nonetheless, we rethought and reconsidered everything. A Presidential visit presents challenges in several broad areas: increased interest and demand for attendance, security, university relations, and of course the event itself. These are neat categories, but each generates scores of further issues and concerns.

For example, in our case the increased interest and demand for attendance required us for the first time in our history to ticket the commencement ceremony. This was understandably unpopular with graduating students, who were limited to four guest tickets each, but whose interests we were trying to protect via the ticketing. Ticketing any event for the first time is always a challenge. Fortunately, our committee identified this need early, attended to the variety of considerations bearing on it, and formulated a strategy and attendant priorities. Our registrar's office then proceeded to implement the plan, working out myriad details and subsidiary problems (authenticating graduates, formulating appropriate disclaimers, devising a lottery for unused tickets, distribution, *etc.*) along the way.

We also were able to foresee that the monster three-tiered media camera platform required by the White House--exactly eighty feet from the stage--would wreck our ceremony, displacing graduates from their customary seating area, and limiting guest attendance beyond any acceptable limit. Had we conformed to this requirement, Mr. Bush probably would have faced a hostile audience. We decided to ignore this White House requirement, and subsequently got away with it, largely

through their inattention until the pre-advance team arrived. By then we had distributed tickets, and it was too late to meet this particular requirement.

We also had to foresee the various physical and other requirements to be met in order to accommodate The President's party during the event: The President's holding room, a senior staff holding room (with communications), a Secret Service post, an advance staff room, a photo opportunity room, and so forth. Fortunately, the coliseum had ample rooms and space to accommodate all these. Necessarily, they all had to be in the same quadrant of the building, which constituted a "clean" or "secure" area to which public access was barred.

Our committee, representing all the relevant offices on campus, was invaluable in identifying potential difficulties and issues as well as in formulating solutions. A smaller, less representative group would have wandered needlessly and missed major issues.

Of course, there are some things one cannot foresee, nor even dream of in the worst of nightmares. Four days before our commencement, the local fire marshal determined that the capacity of our site was not 9,007 persons, as it had been reckoned since 1954, but rather 8,004. It seems that as a courtesy the Secret Service routinely invites the local authorities in for review, and the fire marshal thought that a Presidential visit would be a great opportunity to apply new standards for the first time. He actually threatened to install counters and to close the doors when the newly announced building occupancy was reached. By the time of this new determination we had already distributed tickets to graduates, parents, guests, faculty, and others, well over the newly announced maximum. A catastrophe was averted at length, although there were some sharp exchanges and emergency consultations with the city mothers and fathers.

OVERCOMMUNICATE

The lack of lead time, the magnitude of the campus event together with the presidential visit, and the many uncertainties attending it, all suggest a need for *over*communication. Members of our committee and others associated with it were well aware of this need. While we did not keep minutes of our meetings, all decisions and resolutions were put into writing and circulated. With the relevant constituencies, graduating students, their parents, and so on, we communicated in writing on several occasions, explaining the need for ticketing, and emphasizing ticketing mechanics, logistics, security implications (metal detectors), early arrival, parking, alternative events, and so on. We established a "hot-line" to deal with questions and problems, and saw to it that the student newspaper covered plans and arrangements as well as the circumstances allowed.

Our overcommunication extended as well to the White House advance office. When the pre-advance team arrived, we presented its members with a thick folder of plans, diagrams, analyses, and recommendations from our end, bearing on every aspect of the event, on their concerns as well as ours. In areas where we foresaw disagreement with them, we stated our case plainly and forcefully. We thus let them know we had done our homework, that we had considered counter-proposals, and were ready with counter-arguments. Through these documents, we also let them know what our priorities were, where we were willing to compromise, and where we were not.

Finally, we communicated in advance also with the local Secret Service office, attempting to gain as much insight as we could into the security constraints that would be imposed upon the event. Their advice was informal but helpful.

WORKING WITH THE PRE-ADVANCE TEAM

Contact with the White House advance staff and their associates comes in three stages: preliminary phone calls and mailings, the pre-advance, and the advance. The preliminary telephone calls and mailings focus on accommodations for the advance team and the retinue that ultimately will accompany the President and on media needs. The latter in particular are fairly demanding. The institution should plan on providing work and transmission facilities for the White House press office (including Press Secretary), the White House media (generally 75-150, depending on the event, national or international vicissitudes, political season, and so on), as well as local media. It also will need to provide a briefing room, wherein to hold a press conference if necessary. And there is the monster media platform, with its eighty foot throw. Fortunately, the White House pays for much of this.

About two weeks before the event the pre-advance team swoops in for a look. This team may include a dozen or more people, representing the various governmental offices concerned: the White House advance office, the White House Communications Agency, the Secret Service, the White House Press Office, speechwriting staff, and so on. The pre-advance team will go over the event in some detail and will want to do a complete walk-through of it, videotaping items of interest. In our case, we met on-site and thus had the advantage of immediacy to buttress our arguments. (We could *show* them that the media platform would not work if sited eighty feet from the stage.)

The pre-advance is the group to whom we presented as many conclusions and recommendations as possible, in plans and preparations, even risking the fact (so we were told by other institutions) that the advance team, arriving the week prior to the event, might well ignore or overrule whatever commitments had been made by their predecessors. One of the more interesting aspects of the process is that there is often little or no continuity between the pre-advance and advance teams. In our case, however, the advance "lead" (advance lingo, short for "leader") attended the pre-advance meeting with us, and thus was disinclined to ignore or depart from the agreements already reached.

One should explore as much as possible with this group and come to agreement where possible. The point is not so much to nail down positions--you can't--as to learn more of their expectations and to be better prepared for dealings with the advance team.

WORKING WITH THE ADVANCE TEAM

The advance team will arrive approximately a week before the event. It will consist of some regular White House staff, but also a number of local "volunteers," people in the fundraising, PR, events, and allied businesses in your area. They are mostly quite young, in the professional networking mode, and are quite impressed with their temporary authority.

The event, of course, is Game Day, in the parlance, and your dealings with the advance team thus will occur during Game Week. The advance team will set up offices in a local hotel, and they will identify themselves as *the* White House in your town. No matter how large your committee is, the advance team--consisting of advance office people, Secret Service, WHCA, local Secret Service, press office, and so on--will out-number you by a factor of two or three. Be prepared for large meetings, with questions and demands coming from all sides.

Game Week is the most stressful of times. Despite thorough planning and foresight, there will be scores of changes, requests, demands, and so on. The advance team will have its own priorities, and if these are inconsistent with yours, regardless of what the pre-advance agreed to, they will try to get their way.

Their strategy is one of "divide and conquer." One of your committee colleagues will be pulled aside and asked, or told, to do something *their* way. It might be lighting, sound, the stage, decoration, greenery, the order of events, timing, seating on the stage, access for participants or the audience, media facilities, or dozens of other things. The university's "lead" finds out about it later, either too late to change it, or so late that he or she must ponder whether to make an issue of it.

The way to deal with this "divide and conquer" routine is two-fold. First, as emphasized above, make sure you and your university colleagues know your own priorities and values and can recognize when they are threatened. Second, you must insist that university colleagues make no separate deals and agree to nothing without checking first with the university's lead. Let the advance team know this is your procedure. Don't divide and you won't get conquered.

This strategy puts considerable weight on relations between the advance lead and the university's lead. If you are fortunate, your advance lead will be experienced, will have some understanding of academic culture and events, will communicate well, and will be able to control his or her people. Whatever type lead you are dealt, you will need to continue your habit of overcommunication, setting up special meetings, pulling him or her off to the side for a chat, or, if things are really serious, setting forth your concerns in writing.

The advance team will hold "countdown" meetings daily, usually in the late afternoon. The point of these meetings is to plan, review, revise, update, coordinate, and do all the other things necessary from their side. Usually the university lead and a second will attend, largely as a resource to the advance team. If relations are good and things are not too stressful, these meetings can be interesting for an outsider, watching the Secret Service and others do their thing.

...AND THE WHITE HOUSE COMMUNICATIONS AGENCY

While most of the university's dealings will be with the advance lead and party, two other groups warrant consideration. The first is the White House Communications Agency. One of their jobs is to ensure that the POTUS looks and sounds good. They will alter or add to your sound and lighting systems to bring them (as the event requires) up to network TV standards. The alterations may be major, but the costs are born by the White House. WHCA also handles the special podium and teleprompter that travels with The President, more about which below. And WHCA handles Presidential communications in the broader sense, which

ensure that The President can be in touch with anyone anywhere while he is on your campus. (Yes, the red phone and very senior members of the White House staff travel with him). In our week's experience, the WHCA people were thorough-going professionals, impressive, and enjoyable to be around.

...AND THE SECRET SERVICE

The United States Secret Service personnel are a little less fun than WHCA, but they are nonetheless impressive and very reassuring. The university's coordinating committee members will spend some interesting time with them.

If you are doing a big event, one of your concerns will be the impact that security arrangements have on the event, the audience, and so on. All audiences (as well as participants) for Presidential events must pass through magnetometers. These are what we all know at airports as "metal detectors." With the Secret Service and the advance team, you will refer to them simply as "mags." The most important thing to know about mags is that one mag, fully staffed, can "process" about 700 people in an hour. (Sometimes they are only partially staffed, and this impacts the rate). At some point in your planning, you will have to calculate the probable size of your audience, the number of available portals, how far in advance of the event you can reasonably expect the audience to begin arriving, and then negotiate with the USSS for the appropriate number of mags *and* staff. In our case, their estimates tended to be on the lean side, while ours were at the other end. It all worked out, however, in part because we stressed to graduates and commencement guests (overcommunicate!) the need to arrive early, to leave metal items behind in a safe place, and to expect to have handbags and other items searched. It worked also because the USSS is very good at magging crowds and at handling the inevitable but unforeseen complications.

There is also the "sweep" of the facility. This is not your affair, although the USSS probably will want your chief plant or facilities people present to answer questions, unlock doors, handle contingencies, and so on. In the sweep, suffice it to say, man, beast, and super-sophisticated equipment go over the facility to decontaminate it, that is, to ensure there are no unknown persons, weapons, or other threats present. All university personnel will have to be cleared out of the facility before and during the sweep. Afterwards, the only things that go into the facility must pass through the mags. The nature and extent of the sweep will depend on the event, facility, and so on. Ours took about two hours--considerably less time than anyone at the university would have imagined. Understandably, Secret Service personnel do not reveal much of anything about the sweep, what is done, who and how many people are involved, and so on. It's best left at that.

Your own campus police probably will understand how to work with the USSS. Obviously, the campus security force will have its hands full with traffic, parking, crowd control, demonstrators, and so on. The Secret Service will expect the university to handle problems, for example, demonstrators, during the ceremony in accordance with the university's own customs and values...up to a point. That point is somewhat vaguely defined, but concerns both the safety and *honor* of The President. To the extent possible, some understanding should be reached concerning where that point is, where campus security defers to the USSS to take action. Additionally, it may be important for the USSS to know how the campus police will react in lesser circumstances.

The Secret Service much prefers having no audience in areas behind The President, and will insist upon having at least one agent on the stage with The President. In our commencement, the accompanying agent wore academic regalia and was seated, somewhat inconspicuously among the deans, behind Mr. Bush. Security considerations also dictate that all persons who will be in proximity to The President be identified (name, SSN, date and place of birth), and "pinned"--that is, wear a ribbon or some other visible marker indicating that they have clearance. The clearance list should be provided a few days in advance of the event. The Secret Service may also request identifying information for workers in the facility and others who may frequent it during Game Week.

...AND THE MEDIA

As mentioned earlier, your university will have to provide facilities for the media as well as the White House Press Secretary and staff. These will include an office and staff room for the Press Secretary, an area in which a televised press conference can occur, as well as areas for local and national media. The latter may well want to file their stories or do telecasts on site. Fax, copying, telephone, television, and other sorts of hook-ups will need to be set up to support the visiting media. Telecommunications people will need to put all this in place during Game Week, and they will be supported to some extent by WHCA. The White House pays for most of this, excepting arrangements for the local media. The media facilities should be separate from the event facilities, but certainly within convenient walking distance.

One insightful tip is to provide for some *physical* separation between the national and the local media. It seems the big-time media persons do not like to mix with the yocals.

In all likelihood, a Presidential visit will entail having an unusual number of media people on your campus, both local and national, and it is an opportunity to show the institution to persons who can help carry your message. We provided the visiting media with a small packet of SMU materials (not heavy enough to cause a hernia) and went out of our way to see they were very well treated and fully accommodated. The visit and presence of media also can be a good learning opportunity for communications and journalism students, to assist, observe, and be helpful in whatever ways seem appropriate.

INTERESTING SIDELIGHTS

Although it is not a requirement, and certainly not a feature of our regular commencement, we felt that "Ruffles and Flourishes" and "Hail to the Chief" *had* to occur in our ceremony. The SMU symphony orchestra--which provides a prelude, processional, interlude, and recessional--is an integral part of our commencement ceremony, and we thought it natural that they should perform the traditional Presidential pieces as well.

They did, to everyone's delight, but it was not *that* easy. On attempting to acquire the music for "Hail to the Chief," we discovered pretty quickly that this piece and its preceding fanfare are not commercially available. They are owned by the White House and may be performed only with its permission, in approved circumstances. More than that, they control the performance and will want to hear

it performed in rehearsal to ensure it is up to their musical and acoustic standards. For the musically inclined or knowledgeable, it should be added that the arrangement available is for military band and not symphony orchestra.

The special podium that travels with The President has its own large case, which we came to know as "the Ark of the Holy Podium." The podium apparently contains electronic gear for sound as well as perhaps some of the teleprompter machinery. We also surmised there might be a Cruise missile in it or possibly some Star Wars weaponry. All speakers who used the podium were cautioned repeatedly *not to touch* the microphone.

There are many interesting opportunities for misunderstanding as government and *academe* interact. One of the cases we discovered concerned the mace, that symbol of faculty authority, which is carried onto the stage by the faculty senate president in the commencement procession. In the stage and seating diagram we shared with the Secret Service, the mace was shown to rest on a table next to the podium. Toward the end of Game Week, the head Secret Service agent asked why it was necessary for us to have mace on the stage, reminding us that the Service would handle all security matters.

Finally, all the instructions we received indicated that there had to be a ten-foot deep "buffer zone" extending out from the stage and podium. We were led to believe this was for security purposes, and so it may be. In practice, however, the buffer zone is reserved for and densely populated by the media and news photographers in particular. Apparently, the Secret Service plausibly theorizes that only the most determined assailant would risk associating with these folk, even momentarily.

GAME DAY

Theoretically, Game Day simply realizes all the things you have carefully planned for and coordinated in the preceding weeks. It arrives whether you are ready or not, however, and there is little room for error. By this time everyone knows his or her place, the timeline has been set, the Service performs its sweep, the doors open, and you are underway.

Members of your committee will have their posts and responsibilities set, and will be able to communicate with the university's lead as well as with each other. It is a good idea to have least one member of the committee, perhaps the lead, standing free, that is, with no specific assignment, to take charge and deal with the inevitable problems. If your event is a commencement, such as ours, you can take some comfort in the fact that nearly everyone in the audience will be in a relieved and joyous, indeed euphoric mood, and they will not notice nor care about minor problems. For most other events, the significance of a Presidential appearance has a similar effect.

There is a Game Day *ontology* of time as well as space. In the facility where your event is held, some part of the area will be "theirs"--that is, it will be space belonging to The President's party, Secret Service, and so forth. This will be for the various holding rooms, posts, and so forth. Access to it will be limited to those already cleared, and only for assigned times and tasks. Virtually no one roams free, unless specifically "pinned" by the USSS.

There is also "their" time, roughly from the point when The President's plane touches down and he is *en route*, until the time the event is over and he has departed. Particularly tight times, from the Secret Service's point of view, occur when The President enters the facility and when he departs. During "their" time you will need to run exactly on the timeline agreed upon. Their arrangements, plans, and so forth, depend on it. The advance lead's highest priority, it should be noted, is to keep to the schedule and not to "waste" the time of The President and his party.

In our commencement, keeping to the timeline was an extra strain. Courtesy of the local fire marshal, our customary seating plan for the 1,600 graduates had changed, with only a few days' notice. Instead of two columns of seats, we had three; instead of one central aisle, we had two. Our chief faculty marshal had the unenviable task of redesigning seating for graduates and faculty as well as the procession itself, one of the main features of the event. And he had to communicate the new plan of action to the thirty other faculty marshals. The principal thrust of the new plan was simply the classic directive, "follow me." The marshals had been warned of the need for flexibility, communication, and improvisation, and they and their chief carried through, without so much as a rehearsal, with all the dignity and majesty normally associated with the event. They did so well that the new plan, as it evolved, has been retained for future commencements.

Often, it should be noted, the USSS personnel staffing the mags will shut down when The President enters the event. In their view, the POTUS is the main event, and everyone should be inside by the time of his appearance. With a commencement, however, this approach may cause problems. Mom and dad want to see their son or daughter graduate, they have paid dearly for it, and even if the plane from Houston was detained, they are not likely to understand why the doors to commencement have closed. Fortunately, in our case, the Secret Service was understanding, and kept one mag in operation for latecomers, of whom there were not a few.

Our commencement's Presidential appearance was not without demonstrators. Mostly they were university folk, including a few graduates, and were respectful of their fellow graduates as well as the occasion. There were rumors throughout Game Week of more serious demonstrations (emphasized to us by the USSS, to support their concerns), but these never materialized.

Dealing with demonstrations is a matter that every university has its own way of addressing, depending in part on its values, public or private status, and so on. In our case, we simply reserved a place for demonstrators across the street from the event, met them at campus peripheries with printed instructions concerning what they could do and where they were to demonstrate, and kept the situation under observation. Had problems occurred, we were prepared to deal with them in an escalating fashion, bringing on first the student affairs personnel, then the university attorney, and then the campus police. Apart from the customary "nut," who insisted on getting arrested and being photographed (he espoused no particular cause or dissatisfaction), nothing much took place. A light rain during the ceremony certainly dampened spirits.

At some point in Game Day, most likely on The President's arrival, there will be a photo opportunity with The President. A room for this will need to be set in the secure area. Normally, The President poses individually with members of

the stage party. If your event committee is lucky, members of it who do not have other assignments may be able to have their picture made shaking hands with the POTUS. The advance team manages this affair and it is not entirely unlike having your photo made on a ride in an amusement park. (The university is permitted to have a photographer present as well). There is also a special photo opp for campus police personnel and others that generally occurs at The President's departure. The USSS handles this.

BE LUCKY

This is the best advice. We were. Although there were minor miscommunications and miscoordinations, we generally had someone on hand to fix them quickly.

Somehow an event at the end of the day symbolized our good fortune throughout. A faculty member had lost a valuable watch somewhere in the procession. With 9,000 people moving through the building for the event, there seemed little hope of finding her timepiece intact. Nonetheless, on hearing her problem after the ceremony was over, we called the building manager to see if there was a lost and found office. It so happened that *he* had found the watch himself and put it in his pocket for temporary safekeeping. The watch and owner were reunited just a few minutes after she had reported it lost.

One is reminded nonetheless that, as they say in athletics, "luck is the residue of desire and preparation" (or something like that). In our case, we left very little to fortune, and where we did, fortune favored us.

IS IT WORTH IT?

As soon as our visit was announced publicly, a staff member called several universities that had hosted presidential visits, to ask for pointers. In every case, he reported, the person queried, when told of our impending visit, adopted a hushed, compassionate tone, as if speaking to the bereaved. There was plenty of advice, eventually, some of it represented here. Speaking to the bereaved, however, the most positive comment heard was always "don't worry, you *will* survive it."

An inestimable amount of staff time and energy can go into a Presidential visit such as ours. This comes on the part of the organizing committee, its various members, their assistants, and staffs. In addition to this, many additional hours of work can be expected from carpenters, electricians, sound and light technicians, painters, laborers, caterers, campus traffic, parking, and security personnel, and so on. You will probably rent a mile or so of pipe and draping, barricades, as well as other accoutrements. You will have to pay for motorcade car rental, for facilities and equipment for the local media, for refreshments, and so on.

Over against this, as in our case, there is considerable media coverage. Clipping services and others reported our story had appeared in some 600 newspapers and magazines, with a combined circulation approaching 50,000,000 persons. The story was carried on network TV and radio, and on some 60 individual stations in addition to the extensive statewide coverage in Texas. President Bush's photograph, addressing our graduates, probably will appear in our

student recruitment materials and viewbook for some years to come. Although The President's speech was fairly bland, and no new proposals were broached nor announcements made, one had to feel that the external side of the matter was indeed good for the institution.

Internally, the matter was somewhat mixed. When our visit occurred, the 1992 Presidential campaign was already underway, at least unofficially. Ross Perot's campaign was "on," at the time, and his support, already strong in Dallas, was peaking, thus adding interest to President Bush's appearance here. SMU students and families are heavily Republican, by most lights, and were supportive of Mr. Bush despite his obviously waning popularity. Nevertheless, at least initially, there was strong resentment among students against the perceived political "intrusion" into *their* commencement. Their response by Game Day, however, had tempered and was warm, receptive, and respectful. Unprecedented numbers of students, and faculty, attended the event in good humor. But these sentiments seemed directed toward commencement itself and the Office of The President, and probably not the incumbent nor candidate. There was, of course, considerable political interpretation and commentary in the student newspaper. Nonetheless, the most common verdict at SMU, internally, seems to be that the Bush visit was indeed a good thing, although it certainly would have been better in a non-political year.

In sum, one wants to say that a Presidential visit indeed is "worth it" for the vast majority of institutions. Most crave the attention and the association with The Presidency. Mere money can not buy the visibility and prestige of a Presidential visit and major address. Some few institutions do not need such attention, perhaps, and for them a visit may be an annoyance, if at least a confirmation of their stature. SMU gets a fair amount of public attention, although, like other places, not all of it is favorable. The positive public notice and blessing accorded by the Presidential visit of 1992 was indeed welcome in our case.

CONCLUSION

A Presidential visit is a demanding and stressful occasion, one that requires extraordinary planning and coordination. It is also an opportunity, an historic occasion, and a great privilege for the institution that hosts it.

For those who are involved in its work, the visit also can be a very special and meaningful experience with campus colleagues. Among the members of our commencement committee, I know that our memories of Game Day, the POTUS, and the bright lights will fade quickly. But our memories of the many hours we spent together planning and preparing--sometimes agonizing and desperate, but always filled with the most remarkable good will and camaraderie--will be among the most cherished of our careers.